

House Bill 905

By: Representative Carter of the 159th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

To provide for a homestead exemption from Effingham County School District ad valorem taxes for educational purposes in an amount equal to the amount by which the current year assessed value of a homestead exceeds the adjusted base year assessed value of such homestead; to provide for definitions; to specify the terms and conditions of the exemption and the procedures relating thereto; to provide for applicability; to provide for a referendum, effective dates, and automatic repeal; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

(a) As used in this Act, the term:

(1) "Ad valorem taxes for educational purposes" means all ad valorem taxes for educational purposes levied by, for, or on behalf of the Effingham County School District, including, but not limited to, any ad valorem taxes to pay interest on and to retire county school district bonded indebtedness.

(2) "Base year" means the taxable year immediately preceding the taxable year in which the exemption under this Act is first granted to the most recent owner of such homestead; provided, however, that in the event a reassessment of the homestead causes the actual assessed value of that homestead to be increased, the tax commissioner shall adjust the base year assessed value by the lesser of 3 percent; the percentage change in the Consumer Price Index as reported by the United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics; or the actual percentage increase in the actual assessed value.

(3) "Homestead" means homestead as defined and qualified in Code Section 48-5-40 of the O.C.G.A., as amended, with the additional qualification that it shall include only the primary residence and not more than five contiguous acres of land immediately surrounding such residence.

(b)(1) Each resident of the Effingham County School District is granted an exemption on that person's homestead from Effingham County School District ad valorem taxes for

1 educational purposes in an amount equal to the amount by which the current year
2 assessed value of that homestead exceeds the adjusted base year assessed value of the
3 homestead. This exemption shall not apply to taxes assessed on improvements to the
4 homestead or additional land that is added to the homestead after January 1 of the base
5 year. If any real property is removed from the homestead, the base year assessed value
6 shall be adjusted to reflect such removal and the exemption shall be recalculated
7 accordingly. The value of that property in excess of such exempted amount shall remain
8 subject to taxation.

9 (2) The unremarried surviving spouse of the deceased spouse who has been granted the
10 exemption provided for in paragraph (1) of this subsection shall continue to receive the
11 exemption provided under paragraph (1) of this subsection so long as that unremarried
12 surviving spouse continues to occupy the home as a residence and homestead.

13 (c) A person shall not receive the homestead exemption granted by subsection (b) of this
14 section unless the person or person's agent files an application with the tax commissioner of
15 Effingham County giving such information relative to receiving such exemption as will
16 enable the tax commissioner to make a determination regarding the initial and continuing
17 eligibility of such owner for such exemption. The tax commissioner of Effingham County
18 shall provide application forms for this purpose.

19 (d) The exemption shall be claimed and returned as provided in Code Section 48-5-50.1 of
20 the O.C.G.A., as amended. The exemption shall be automatically renewed from year to year
21 so long as the owner occupies the residence as a homestead. After a person has filed the
22 proper application as provided in subsection (c) of this section, it shall not be necessary to
23 make application thereafter for any year and the exemption shall continue to be allowed to
24 such person. It shall be the duty of any person granted the homestead exemption under
25 subsection (b) of this section to notify the tax commissioner of the county in the event that
26 person for any reason becomes ineligible for that exemption.

27 (e) The exemption granted by subsection (b) of this section shall not apply to or affect state
28 ad valorem taxes, county ad valorem taxes for county purposes, municipal ad valorem taxes
29 for municipal purposes, or independent school district taxes for educational purposes. The
30 homestead exemption granted by subsection (b) of this section shall be in addition to and not
31 in lieu of any other homestead exemption applicable to county school district ad valorem
32 taxes for educational purposes.

33 (f) The exemption granted by subsection (b) of this section shall apply to all taxable years
34 beginning on or after January 1, 2007.

SECTION 2.

Unless prohibited by the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended, the election superintendent of Effingham County shall call and conduct an election as provided in this section for the purpose of submitting this Act to the electors of the Effingham County School District for approval or rejection. The election superintendent shall conduct that election on the date of the November, 2006, state-wide general election and shall issue the call and conduct that election as provided by general law. The election superintendent shall cause the date and purpose of the election to be published once a week for two weeks immediately preceding the date thereof in the official organ of Effingham County. The ballot shall have written or printed thereon the words:

"() YES Shall the Act be approved which provides a homestead exemption from Effingham County School District taxes for educational purposes in an amount equal to the amount by which the current year assessed value of a homestead exceeds the adjusted base year assessed value of such homestead?"

All persons desiring to vote for approval of the Act shall vote "Yes," and all persons desiring to vote for rejection of the Act shall vote "No." If more than one-half of the votes cast on such question are for approval of the Act, Section 1 of this Act shall become of full force and effect on January 1, 2007. If the Act is not so approved or if the election is not conducted as provided in this section, Section 1 of this Act shall not become effective and this Act shall be automatically repealed on the first day of January immediately following that election date. The expense of such election shall be borne by Effingham County. It shall be the election superintendent's duty to certify the result thereof to the Secretary of State.

SECTION 3.

Except as otherwise provided in Section 2 of this Act, this Act shall become effective upon its approval by the Governor or upon its becoming law without such approval.

SECTION 4.

All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.